My mother was a sculptor and a collector. She collected many things, but her holy grail were rocks with holes. She collected many over the course of her life.

Being diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer’s was a curse. The disease she feared most. She had witnessed her own mother’s dying this way. It hit her hard. It hit the family hard. She wished for a dignified death, to not have to experience, and for her family to witness, the undignified deterioration that is Alzheimer’s. We would have loved to be able to grant her this wish.

Instead we all experienced her gradual and terrible decline.

My mother lost her sense of humour first. Then she lost the skill to learn new things. She lost her optimism. She lost her excellent problem solving abilities. She lost her beloved skill to read. She lost her disgust for milk. She lost her friends. She lost her kids. She lost her dignity. She lost herself.

Slowly and with much delay we learned to accept these losses. We had to deal with this grieving these losses over many years.

Each rock symbolises a part of my mother we lost. Together we put her back together again, and can remember her as the beautiful being she was.